



Tribute to Professor Matt Hils



Sadly, we are dedicating this issue of the Hiram College Field Station Newsletter to Professor Matt Hils who was the director at the Field Station and Center for the Study of Nature and Society. On Tuesday, June 10th he passed away peacefully at his home at the age of 58.

"So much of the changing face of the Field Station is a reflection of Matt's vision. His implementation of the stewardship plan for the station and his commitment to utilizing the site to its fullest potential while protecting the integrity of the natural features demonstrate his concerns for both teaching and stewardship. In fact, Matt is the reason I find myself working here at the field station. Matt was a generous person and a delight to work with. I will always remember our working lunches where planning was accompanied by food and fellowship." – Emliss Ricks, Field Station Stewardship

Biology Professor Brad Goodner writes, "Matt Hils was a huge sports fan and the week that we lost Matt also saw the death of the baseball great Tony Gwynn. Both men died too young after battles with cancer, but Matt Hils and Tony Gwynn had two other things in common that we should all emulate. One, they were both intensely dedicated to their chosen professions, but their love for what they did meant that it didn't seem like a job but rather a life mission. Matt was dedicated to undergraduate education, botanical scholarship, and environmental stewardship. They each freely gave their time to the betterment of others. No conversation was too trivial and everyone deserved support of some kind. We all can carry on Matt's legacy if we work on these attributes in ourselves."

"I will always remember Matt's positive and selfless spirit. No matter the challenges he was facing in his own life he was always smiling, always offering words of encouragement. I will always remember and miss his positive and selfless spirit." – Dr. Julie Maxson, Professor of Biology



We would like to thank all that attended the memorial service held here at the Field Station. Memorial gifts can be made in Professor Hils' honor to Hiram College, P.O. Box 67, Hiram, OH 44234.

I met Matt on a hike to view the Eagle Creek restoration project. He talked about the need for citizen scientists, and we set up a meeting so I could learn how I might volunteer at the Field Station. That meeting led to so many opportunities for learning, helping, creating, and laughing and to a dear friendship with Matt. I will miss him so much. – Jane O'Brien



"He had a book for everything, which he gave out freely.....plants, food, boundaries, bad moods...you name it, he had it, and then you had it! He was incredibly generous with his time and resources, and he never let a teachable moment slip away." – Dr. Carol Shreiner, Professor of Chemistry

"I was one of the first students here at Hiram to have Matt as a professor and he was amazing. We spent more time at the Field Station than in the classroom. After graduation I came back and I was re-introduced to Matt and realized once again how nice he was. He was easy to work with and valued my thoughts and opinions and eventually he even hired me to work here. Like that first plant class most of our good times were spent outdoors at the Station, or at lunch, which he was very generous with! I will miss him very much. I am sure that wherever we go after we leave this world the ones who waited around for the new guy will be glad they did, it is just too bad he could not have stayed here." – Jim Tolan '86 Field Station Steward

"I have known Matt first as a student back in 1984, then as friend and finally as a colleague. Every time I look at a flower I will think of Matt. He has taught me patience, understanding and skills that I will continue to use in my life. The Field Station will never be the same without you! REST IN PEACE MY FRIEND!" –Jim Metzinger '88 Associate Director of JHB Field Station.

Matt was born in Ft. Benning, Georgia on November 27, 1955. He lived in the Hiram area for the past 30 years and has done tremendous work for the community. He earned his bachelor of arts in biology at Thomas More College, his master's degree in botany from Miami University and his Ph.D. in botany from the University of Florida. The courses he taught at Hiram College since 1984, were field-based, with much time spent collecting and working with living organisms. He led a vascular plants systematic course involving a 10-day trip from the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee to the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis. He also led several study abroad trips to the Galapagos Islands and Trinidad and Tobago.

He will not only be remembered as an advisor, but as a mentor for thousands of students who had the privilege of knowing him both in and out of the classroom.